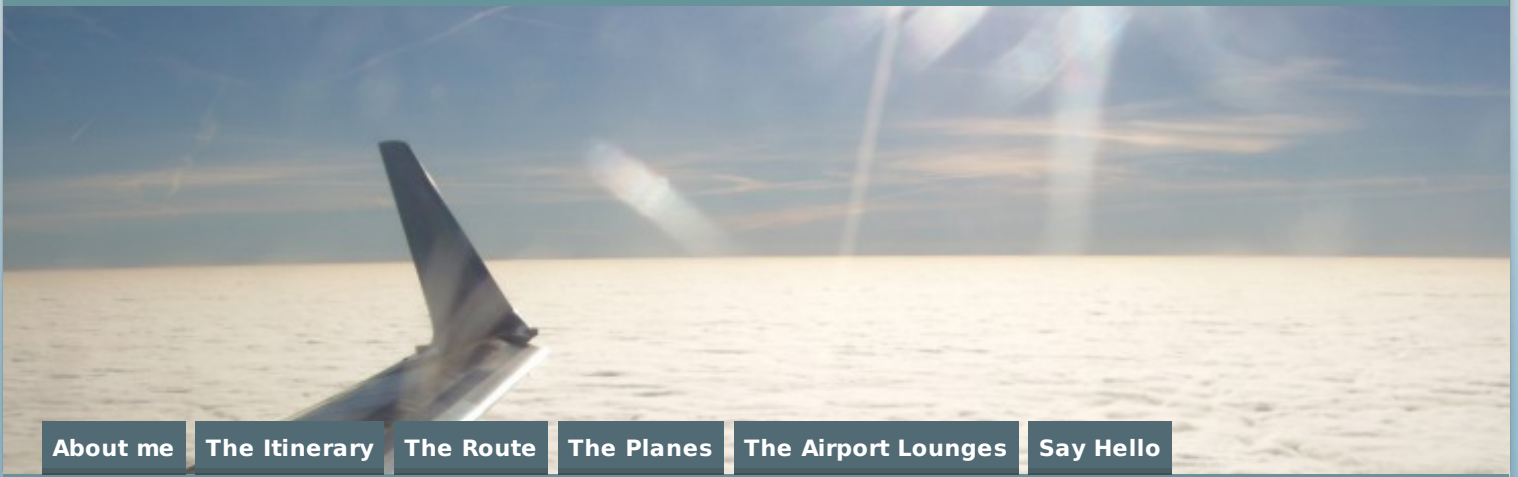





Our trip of a lifetime



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 **Amazing Athens – Wine, woman and song.** Posted by: **chalice1** | September 3, 2009

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Was hot, crowded and dusty but you just have to do it. Walking the Acropolis is an absolute must.

Arriving at Athens airport, we were speedily processed through customs and immigration having been first off the plane. We arrived at the carousel and once again, our bags popped up first; however, Alan had to get some Euro's at the currency exchange and left a little something at the counter that we were to discover that night when Aly went to read his book.

Our driver was waiting for us with a sign and in minutes we were in his air conditioned Mercedes speeding to the **Grande Bretagne Hotel** in the heart of Athens. It was so hot once we alighted the car that I was wringing wet in minutes. We waited a little at reception due to a large number of guests being received but at least it was cool. We were taken to our room which we just loved. Much smaller than our room at the Emirates Palace Hotel but traditionally decorated and a very comfortable room complete with marble bathroom and plenty of storage space.



A Greek guard on duty at the House of Parliament right across from our hotel.

It is a big hotel hosting a myriad of visitors from all over and the roof top pool, while not a big space, was ample to get cool and have a refreshing drink. Breakfast was located on the roof top with the most amazing views of the city, the Acropolis and visions of the sea. I thought the variety of breakfast foods was amazing and it became a highlight of my stay. We did have dinner on the roof top on the last night at the hotel before we departed on the [Star Clipper](#) the following day. The feeling on that roof top that evening as the Acropolis commenced it's thrilling light show was something I will never be able to convey in words. It was felt in the heart and I experienced a feeling of peace and joy. If you get the chance, do yourself a favor and have dinner on the roof top of this hotel...it is a time in my life I will never forget.



Sending the Etihad sleeper suits, amenity kits etc home by mail. We are to receive more when we travel home but I really didn't want to just leave them as I'd like to share them around my family. Our bed in the Grande Bretagne Hotel.

Rather than take organized tours which don't suit us, we hired a driver for two days who was able to tailor a tour of things we wanted to see and things we didn't even know existed. David from Athens Taxi service was just amazing. Having been in Australia and now in Greece, his English was outstanding and his knowledge of Greece excellent. We had such fun with David and I would highly recommend him to anyone. His e-mail for anyone interested in using his services is [davidtaxi@mail.com](mailto:davidtaxi@mail.com). You will not be disappointed and the overall cost of our tours was comparative with the prices of many of the tours available and you don't have to follow a colored umbrella or wear a number tag.

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## PORTS OF CALL

Our first tour day was spent seeing the hot spots of Athens with outstanding commentary by David and the second day we toured Corinth including the Corinth Canal, Nafplio and surrounding areas having a fantastic lunch of Greek Salad and Grilled Octopus at a restaurant recommended by David. What an amazing day and we have such wonderful footage to include in our travel documentary.

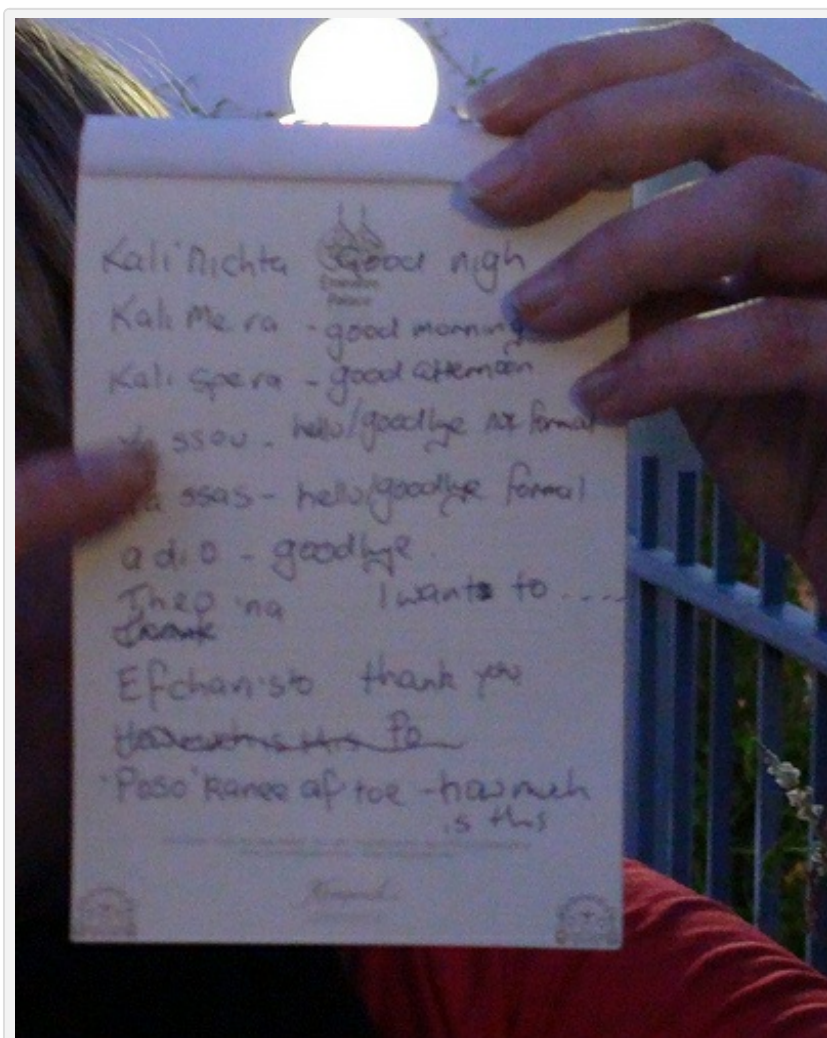


One of the many amazing structures in Athens

One downside to all this heat and air travel was my old problem of swollen feet moving up to my legs. No matter how much water I drink or how often I raise my feet it always plagues me when traveling. It was becoming really painful and hindered my plans to walk everywhere by foot. The Grande Bretagne Hotel offered an amazing Spa facility which I took advantage of. The lovely masseuse worked like mad to disperse the fluid from my feet and I was able to use the various treatment rooms on offer. There are a number of wonderful sauna rooms including my fav the amethyst grotto and never ending chipped ice to soak your tired feet. That had to be one of the best massages I have ever had.

On to Aly's faux pas. He left his Calvin Klein travel bag at the currency exchange counter at Athens airport. It was a laugh trying to work out the number to ring the airline but finally we got through to a London office. They promised to e-mail if they found the bag; however, shortly after they confirmed the bag wasn't claimed on the flight. Finally we found it at the lost property office at the airport. He was unaware that he had left it there as he swore he recalled seeing it on the seat of the plane.

As we often do, we walked around until we found a restaurant, taverna or cafe that appealed to us. We of course fell in love with the Plaka district and returned numerous times to try out new places. I would walk around in my Havana thongs and carry my good shoe's ready to throw on when we found somewhere we wanted to eat. I was enjoying collecting more and more Greek words the more we immersed ourselves in the buzz of the city and it's people and you can see me with my hastily written translations which I kept referring to all the time.



Trying my hardest to speak with the locals.

Walking the Plaka, there are some **spruikers** who try to lure you into their specific place of business. One night I promised every one of them that I would return the next night for dinner because I just couldn't say no. Well we returned to the guy who gave me the business card of the taverna the night before. Here is a video of Aly with me as interviewer after quite a few drinks on the roof top of a taverna in Plaka, the name

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- London, United Kingdom arrived 14 hours 34 mins ago.
- London, United Kingdom arrived 14 hours 35 mins ago.
- Abu Dhabi, Abū Z?aby, United Arab Emirates arrived 18 hours 27 mins ago.
- Helsinki, Southern Finland, Finland arrived 22 hours 28 mins ago.
- Helsinki, Southern Finland, Finland arrived 1 day 12 hours ago.
- Bury Saint Edmunds, United Kingdom arrived 1 day 18 hours ago.

of which escapes me right now. We had an absolute ball there and I have discovered my sensibilities are similar to those of the Greeks.

I just had to include a small piece from our video collection on the roof top in Plaka. We were having such fun and got carried away by the music and atmosphere that we had to order more wine and Mastika which I fell in love with. Unfortunately my bottle of Mastika came to an unfortunate end in my backpack arriving in Heathrow wrapped in Aly's jocks and socks totally smashed to bits. A sodden mess of Greek liqueur, his undies will never be the same again but I'm happy to say he didn't suck on them to obtain the juice.

I actually started a thread on Trip Advisor where I declared my love for Athens. It was amazing because this caused a big dispute about whether Athens is the ass end of the earth or a treasure of a city. I believe it is a treasure. Yes there is rubbish around, beggars, tourist shops on every corner and loads of people this time of year but I feel it adds to the heart of this city. I loved the people who in turn love life.

We finished our Athens adventure on a total high making our way by chauffeur driven car to the Port of Piraeus ready to meet our ship which was to take us on a further adventure to Mykanos, Santorini, Yithion, Corfu, Kotor, Dubrovnik, Korcula, Hvar, Mali Losinj and Venice.

The story continues 😊 ))

4 Comments

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Message from home while on the road.

Posted by: [chalice1](#) | August 28, 2009

Who misses the dog when on the road traveling???? Me, me, me.

Of course I miss my family and friends but it is China Jones, my faithful furry friend

who brings a tear to my eye when I think of not being able to snuggle her every night when I put her to bed. Only the like minded will know what I mean.

Just had to share this photo with you that my friend Lyn sent me. She has been taking China on day trips with her and took a photo of China at her work with Coast Guard Victoria. Thanks Lyns...this has just made us laugh like idiots in our hotel room at **Ruzzini Palace Hotel** in Venice. Isn't she cute?



China Jones - she is Diva's little diva.

4 Comments

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■ **Yabba Dabba Do at Abu Dhabi.**

Posted by: **chalice1** | August 27, 2009





One of the stunning areas of the Emirates Palace Hotel - our room is on the 4th floor.

Arriving at the **Emirates Palace** was a mouth-dropping experience. Oooh's and ah's were emanating from the back seat as Aly and I realised that the sweeping road leading up to an amazing building was in fact the hotel where we would be staying. I was so thrilled to see Aly just sit there in the car shaking his head in wonderment that the sight before us was actually our hotel. In all honesty, Aly said 'Bloody hell, we're not stopping here are we?' Typical him...he loves the good life but is still at heart very humble.

After the incredible Etihad experience, we were in the frame of mind to be spoiled and pampered. What we received was simply perfection and throughout our time at the hotel, everyone was attentive and professional, warm and genuine. From the beautiful bunch of roses imported from Holland given me on our arrival to the single stem red rose kindly handed me on our departure, I felt a member of the Emirates Palace family. Aly and I both discussed this and we agreed that there was a warmth from the employees that didn't seem engineered or forced.

We loved our room and balcony looking over the front of the hotel to the amazing domed building that changed color every few minutes. At night it looked like Christmas. Unfortunately it was in our room that I lost the first lot of photo's and video's that included getting into the Etihad courtesy car, the plane interior and the first day in our room. I lost it because I thought I was downloading it to my hard drive but obviously wasn't. I'm so disappointed and had to just let it go or I would have dwelled on this and it would have impacted on our fun.



Another amazing vista. Gold and glowing.

It was 1 kilometre from the east wing to the west wing (vice versa) and took some skilled navigation not to get lost amongst the gold gilding; however, there was always friendly staff to point us in the right direction. The heat was quite oppressive though and being outside caused you to be drenched in sweat withing minutes. Consequently we spent a lot of time at the east wing pool complete with swim through bar.



The water was a perfect temperature to keep cool on the outside and the wet bar just ideal to keep the inside cool. Their Mojito's were amazing.

We did venture out to the Marina Mall shopping centre where it was lovely and cool. Only a short taxi ride from the hotel, it was huge and full of global brands we all know and love. I did however see a few women dressed in strappy tops and skimpy shorts. People were right, they stood out from everyone else dressed conservatively and locals did stare and pay them attention. It would have made me really uncomfortable



so in my mind there is no doubt that modest dressing will enhance your stay in Abu Dhabi.



A place where we spent a lot of time. Mojito's a specialty. Thank you to all the pool and bar staff for your fine attention. You were all exceptional.

Walking around the hotel was great fun as there are so many places to lounge, dine and drink. We had the buffet breakfast in a massive room accessed by two sweeping staircases and it was so comfortable. I've had a few hotel breakfasts in my time but this was akin to a breakfast banquet. Foods to cater to all tastes throughout the continents were beautifully displayed and I went troppo on the fine coffee. I'm often an eat'n'run kind of girl but in the comfortable arm chairs and the variety of food available, Aly had to drag me out. Thank God we got lost in the hotel because we could at least walk off some of the calories.

The night we arrived we took advantage of room service and it was fantastic. We both raved about the food which was delivered on an immaculately prepared trolley table complete with flowers and every accompaniment you could wish for.

Another night we dined at the **Sayad** restaurant in the hotel and had an absolute ball enjoying a wonderful meal prepared by an Australian chef. Until I can get home and take stills from my video footage, I'm including a small video of our entree's. The restaurant was lovely and very relaxing. Pricey but worth it.

Whilst I do realise that staying at this hotel is considered wasteful, decadent and obscene to some, it was a stunning experience that we worked hard to obtain over the years. To be honest, not much will come close to the level of personal attention we received. Diva needs to quickly grab herself a tent and backpack before she loses touch with reality all together. Sotto voce - I've never camped in my life.

Overall, we would thoroughly recommend the Emirates Palace for those who wish to pamper themselves a little and experience Middle Eastern hospitality at it's best. We were so sad to leave this hotel. We genuinely felt a little emotional when they said good bye to us and sent us off with a lovely rose and huge smiles. Might sound soppy



but it's how we felt at the time.

Etihad once again were true to form and were waiting for us at 0600 to return us to **Abu Dhabi International Airport** for our flight to Athens.

Date: 11th August 2009

Carrier: Etihad

Flight: EY 0091

Depart: Abu Dhabi International Airport

Arrive: Athens International Airport

Take Off: 0925

Arrive: 1315

Aircraft: A32

Class: Business



First Class Lounge - Abu Dhabi - Terminal 3. A smile, some food, a massage...what else does one want??

Upon arrival at the airport we pulled up at Terminal 1 Etihad premium class area where we were processed in minutes. I was however; hopping around the airport trying to put my shoes back on and handle our hand luggage once we went through the screening process. Because there was no first class service to Athens we attempted to see if we could access the First lounge in Terminal 1 showing our initial First boarding passes from Melbourne to Abu Dhabi; however, they would not let us in. They told us to make our way to Terminal 3 and use those lounges. At Terminal 3 we entered the premium lounges where they allowed us access to the First lounge given our trip was primarily in F. Yes it was small and nothing like the amazing Etihad F lounge in Terminal 1, but we were treated so well and my waffles were AMAZINGLY yummy. We had soothing massages and sat back enjoying a restful moment in the trip. I had made Aly wear a Birthday badge all day from when we awoke because it was his birthday.



Delicious waffles with poached fruits. I swear it was heaven.

We were advised that we could board the plane now and left the relative calm of the lounge to the boarding area. It was every man for himself boarding the plane and we made our way to our seats 2A and 2C. With only 6 people out of 20 available seats in Business, there was certainly room. Meals were delivered speedily by a lovely attentive crew.



Etihad flight 0019 - Business Class. My fish meal which was so tasty.



Aly's meal - eye fillet and vegetables. He said the steak was cooked perfectly.

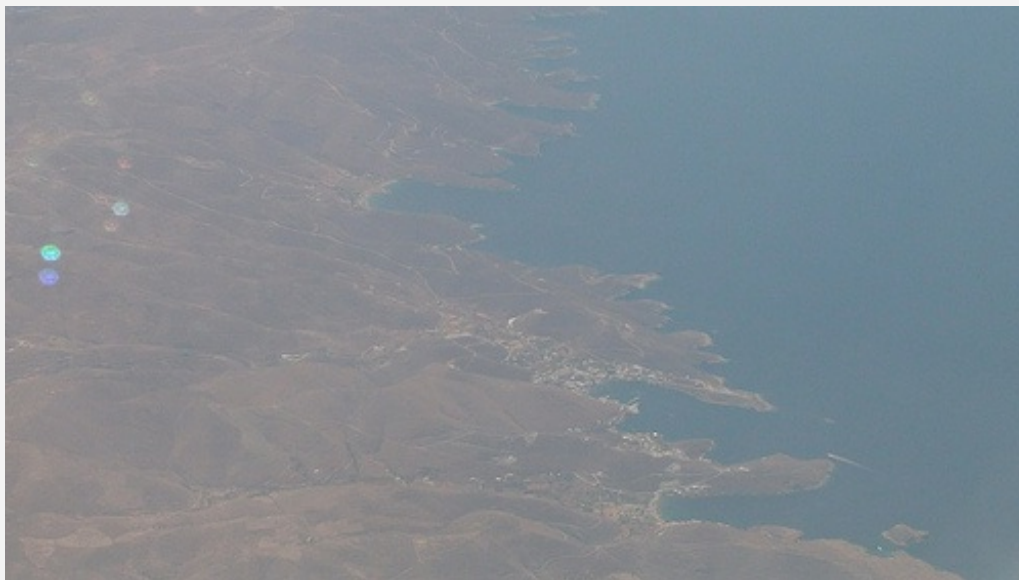


After the meal and about an hour prior to landing in Athens, the crew presented Aly with a birthday cake and everyone sung happy birthday. We shared it with the pilot, crew and four other passengers in business. Thanks Etihad....it was just lovely.



Aly's birthday cake at 35 thousand feet. It was so special and he was surprised.

The flight was great. Hardly any turbulence and no flipping out by me. I think I'm over my flying phobia. We slept a bit and watched the scenery out the window.



A view of the Greek coast line - I apologise for the poor quality but I included it nonetheless.

We landed on time and processed through customs once again at the blink of an eye. Unfortunately my Aly in converting his money into Euro, left his bag at the money exchange bureau and neither of us realized until Aly came to read his book that afternoon. Aly initially thought he had left it on the plane. He even recounted the story of how he could see it sitting on our seat when he went to get out the other luggage. We called Etihad and they were to check the flight for the bag. The answer came back negative that the bag was left on our seats and we came to the conclusion that someone may have carried it off. In a blinding moment of clarity for Aly three days later, he felt that he may have left the bag at the Bureau de Change counter which prompted me to ring the Airport. After some fun and games with the language differences, I finally found his bag in the police lost property office situated at the airport. Next day, brave Aly caught a bus to the airport to retrieve his bag. He returned the same day negating the need for me to call missing persons in Greece. He was a hero returning home with his bounty.



A plane on the tarmac of Athens International Airport

All in all, Etihad and Abu Dhabi has been such a positive experience. I'll get moving on my Athens piece and then on to the Star Clipper cruise through the Greek and Croatian Islands. I am behind because we just couldn't get WiFi on the cruise so all that we could do was relax and enjoy without worrying about blog writing. Now I'm in Venice with WiFi, I will get my A into G and share.

Please take a moment to send Athens your positive thoughts given their recent fires just moments after we left. God Bless Athens.

5 Comments

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## ■ The First Day – Home to Heaven

Posted by: [chalice1](#) | August 14, 2009

Date: 8th August 2009

Carrier: Etihad

Flight: EY 461

Depart: Melbourne Airport

Arrive: Abu Dhabi International Airport

Take Off: 2215

Arrive: 0635

Aircraft: A346

Class: F

The Etihad courtesy car, an Audi Turbo, arrived promptly at 1600. We were packed and ready but still I was fluffing around double checking everything. Our driver, Richard, hoisted our luggage in the car and we bid China, Agador and Lyn farewell. I was waving like the Queen on my way down the driveway. We were strangely calm, not quite believing that this long awaited day had dawned. We had a terrific run to the airport and were deposited at arrivals with our luggage.





Arriving with luggage at Melbourne Airport

Mind you, we arrived at around 1745, hours early so we could get in the mood. We walked around dragging our luggage for over an hour and decided to have our cases wrapped in plastic just in case they couldn't cope with the load. Finally at around 2130, the check in desk for F opened and we were the only customers at that time. From that moment on, it was friendly service all the way. We received our boarding passes and entrance card allowing entry to the Qantas Business Lounge. After two sly cigarettes out the front - for medicinal purposes only - we made our way through immigration/customs to the lounge. Whilst we were ecstatic to be in any lounge, it would have been awesome to have spent time in the Qantas First Lounge but Etihad is only permitted to use the Business one. It's a big space and we made ourselves comfortable having a few nibbles and Aly a scotch'n'coke or two. I on the other hand being mindful of how my feet swell when flying, stuck to water and juice. I popped a nicotine patch on my arm and hoped it would suffice until I reached Abu Dhabi. Unfortunately I think this had an adverse effect on me during the trip because I was so unbearably hot throughout the flight I was beginning to feel distressed. More on that later.



In the Qantas Business Lounge - I forgot to take a photo before we ate. Note the Nicobate which sent me troppo.

Sitting in the Qantas lounge, both Aly and I became extremely tired and I think I was feeling some anxiety which was affecting me physically. I was tired but couldn't seem to just rest. I was up and down the whole time and when they announced the boarding, I couldn't wait to just get on the plane. By the time we arrived at departure gate 10 and swiftly made it through to the plane, I was feeling like the walking dead. I was tired, excited, anxious all rolled into one. This is the primary reason why I didn't take hardly any photographs in the cabin. We just didn't have the energy. Aly was so tired that he could barely keep his eyes open and I was so hot that I didn't know what

to do. I was feeling so anxious and it felt like there was literally no air in the cabin. I just couldn't seem to concentrate on anything except staying awake to eat my dinner.

Upon entering the cabin, we were welcomed by all the crew working first and our amenity kit, cool Etihad jim jam's and menu for the flight were given to us. Aly and I sat in 2A and 3A, directly behind each other so we could have a window seat each. We felt the cabin was so roomy and set out in such a way to afford each passenger as much privacy as possible. We both indulged in some champagne and Aly also felt the need for a scotch. Take off was bang on time and once in the air, we were asked for our food orders and Scott, one of the wonderful crew, explained the menu. The food was excellent and far exceeded my expectations.

We managed to sleep for quite some hours, Aly more so than I however. The crew asked if we would like to change into our sleeper suits and they would make up our bed. I jumped up in a flash and took up the offer but Aly said he would just finish his drinks. Two seconds later he was out for the count in his clothes and bed unmade. I was waiting in the lounge area up the front and within about 2 minutes I was ushered back to my newly made up bed. It looked so inviting that I got in and was asleep within minutes. I did keep waking up every couple of hours to wet some face washers to lay on my head and neck. Now I'm thinking that it might have been the nicotine patch that raised my internal temperature to boiling point. Aly did agree that the cabin was quite stuffy but he wasn't heat distressed like me and it seemed neither was anyone else in the cabin. Out of the 8 in first, I was the only one who looked cooked. I must say that all of the crew were so attentive and warm toward us. Scott in particular was just amazing and he really made our flight something very special. He and Aly talked for ages about different things and whilst I was sleeping, I fear he plied Aly with more alcohol. At one point, Aly looked like he was on dish washing duty at Jackson and Young (i.e. a busy pub) there were so many empties on his table...lol.

I can honestly say that the flight did not feel like 14 odd hours. We slept for hours of it and arrived totally fresh in Abu Dhabi on time. We fast-tracked through customs etc so quickly that I didn't quite realize that we were walking through the exit door of arrivals. The process from start to finish was utterly excellent and Etihad is to be congratulated on the quality service we experienced on this leg.

Our Etihad driver was waiting for us at the airport and before we knew it, we had arrived at the Emirates Palace hotel. Now that is a whole other story which I will save for my next post. To say it was a wonderful experience is entirely an understatement. It was mind-blowing.

Please forgive my spelling....I can't find my glasses.

12 Comments

Posted in [Uncategorized](#)

Etihad First Class – Better Than  
My Imagination

Posted by: [chalice1](#) | August 10, 2009



Etihad First Class Check In - MEL

A thousand apologies for not updating sooner but OMG...it's so hot, we were tired and time is just flying. Just wanted to log in to say that everything is wonderful. The Etihad flight was better than my wildest dreams and I will update in more detail tomorrow.



Champagne Tastes Better In First

The Emirates Palace is unbelievable and we really need to leave here before we become too spoilt and indulged. It is 12.20am on Tuesday the 11th of August and we have to be up at 0515 ready for our limo back to Abu Dhabi Airport to catch our flight to Athens. I promise I will write a thorough post about our trip from Athens but right now I'm just about done and need to get some sleep. It is just so hot in Abu Dhabi. Think of a sauna and then add 20 degrees. Thank God for the pool and wet bar making the most awesome Mojito's. Without that I would have dehydrated to my death.

Before closing, I would just like to thank Scott and the Etihad cabin crew working F on flight EY461 that departed MEL on Saturday the 8th of August. You were all absolutely amazing and looked after us like gold. Truly with service like that, Etihad will be top of the pack in no time at all. Just thank you 😊 You exceeded my expectations ten fold.

Ok...Diva signing off until tomorrow in Athens. Thanks you to everyone who has sent messages. I tell you, they are so wonderful to receive.

Two days into the trip and I think I'll be up for excess baggage. What with the amenity kits, sleeping suits and all the stuff I have collected from the Emirates Palace, we'll



have to think about sending it home by sea post. Lol.

Ciao.

6 Comments

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## ■ The Eve.

Posted by: **chalice1** | August 7, 2009

Let me see if I can write something intelligible with my eye balls nearly falling out their sockets after too much Vietnamese food, red wine and Vietnamese birthday cake. We have had a wonderful night with our wonderful family celebrating a Leo laden birthday month on the eve of our trip. It was a lovely night.

One more sleep left and despite thinking I was organized, I have yet to pack my case. The red wine has rendered me incapable of doing this tonight and all that is left is to crawl into bed and surrender to sleep. Tomorrow will have to do. Limo is not coming until 4pm so surely I can get it together before then.

Goodnight one and all. I have my camera ready, my senses on high alert and my mind emptied so that I can soak in everything around me.

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## ■ 4 Sleeps

Posted by: **chalice1** | August 4, 2009



## My Etihad charter flying over the Emirates Palace Hotel

Are we there yet???????????

Stop the world, I want to get off!

Is this really happening to me? Am I really going on this trip? I'm so tired yet I can't sleep. I actually had a dream last night when I finally drifted off that we had returned home from the holiday yet I couldn't remember anything about it. I remember saying to Aly in the dream 'Omg, I don't feel like it even happened. I don't remember anything about it'. I woke up thinking I'd gone and come home with no memory of it. It took me a few minutes to realize it was a dream. That's even inspired me more to document everything about it so I can get my money's worth, even years after.

Yesterday I photocopied two copies of our travel documents in color. The originals in the hand luggage, a copy in the check in luggage and a copy for home. Because we have so much paperwork, we purchased a cool leather compendium from [Kikki K](#) and I've placed everything in clear plastic sheet protectors from the start of our trip to the end. That way I can pull out the relevant documentation for each leg and place in our travel folder ready to present quickly. Everything is in sections so it will be so easy to grab what is needed on any given day.

I had a trial run at packing my case and yes, it did fit. Well the clothes fit, it's only my shoes and toiletry bags that need to be packed in another bag as check in luggage. Not too bad really because if the truth be known, even I had doubts it would all fit in and not give the baggage handlers a double hernia. I don't like to gloat but I did take great pleasure in presenting my closed and zipped case to Aly being careful to hide what didn't quite fit.

I have been trying to work out how best to deal with the flight. I think that I'll try to get on Abu Dhabi time when I enter the aircraft. The UAE is 6 hours behind us so we'll be taking off around 4.15pm UAE time. I figure I will try to stay up for a few hours then go to sleep. We arrive at 6.30am so if I time it right, I'll wake up to an early breakfast and then land. I plan to get to the hotel and sit by the pool until we are permitted to check in. Stupid me forgot to arrange an early check in but that's ok...pool side is fine by me for a few hours. In the photo above, see that pool to the left? You'll find me somewhere in there. For the first few days I'll try to stay away from all living beings in case I scare them with my lily white skin...don't want to frighten the horses now do I?

By the time I get to Athens, I will hopefully have a tan and not look like I've been in the midst of an Aussie winter.

Oh and I won't forget to Slip, Slop, Slap. For those who don't know what that is...take a look at the message from the [Cancer Council of Australia](#).. You just gotta see this video...it's an Aussie institution. Don't laugh...it was made in the early 80's.

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## It's The Final Countdown...7 Day Itch.

Posted by: [chalice1](#) | August 1, 2009

All day today our conversations have taken the following path.

**0800 Aly** - "This time next week the limo will be arriving in 8 hours".  
**1600 Diva** - "This time next week we'll be getting into the limo now".  
**1800 Aly** - "This time next week we'll be at the airport".  
**2000 Diva** - "This time next week we'll be drinking champagne in the lounge".  
**2200 Aly** - "This time next week we'll be sitting on the plane".  
**2215 Diva** - "This time next week we'll be taking off".

I don't think we've ever wished our life away so much before and I know that from 2215 on the 8th of August we will stop that ridiculousness and start to wish that time would stand still. I feel toey and restless like one often does when the unknown is ahead and your familiar routine is about to be swept from under you. Yet there is so much excitement at the prospect of new sights, smells, tastes and experiences just waiting to be had.

There is nothing like traveling to get you out of yourself, to see the world with your own eyes and realize that those grainy, dulled images in the news reports on TV of faraway places are in reality, as colorful, vibrant and real as the sights in your own country. For those who love to travel, there is something so magical about immersing



yourself in different cultures where we are all so different and yet the same. I remember standing on the beach in Dubai near the [Burj Al Arab hotel](#) watching local families enjoy the beach. The women may have been wearing the abayah which to my eyes was different but the scene was the same the world over...mum, dad and children enjoying the lapping water, laughing and carefree in those moments. The sun was setting across the Persian Gulf that day and I felt a sense of peace in the thought that even thousands of miles from home, being an inhabitant of earth bonded me to these people.

U2's "It's a beautiful day" is a song that reminds me how beautiful this world is. Every time I hear it, I am transported by my memories to previous travels and the sights I have seen. When I sit in a plane and look down upon the land far below me, I am in awe that life is being played out in a tent, a suburban home, a ship, an oil rig, a mud hut or any number of dwellings.

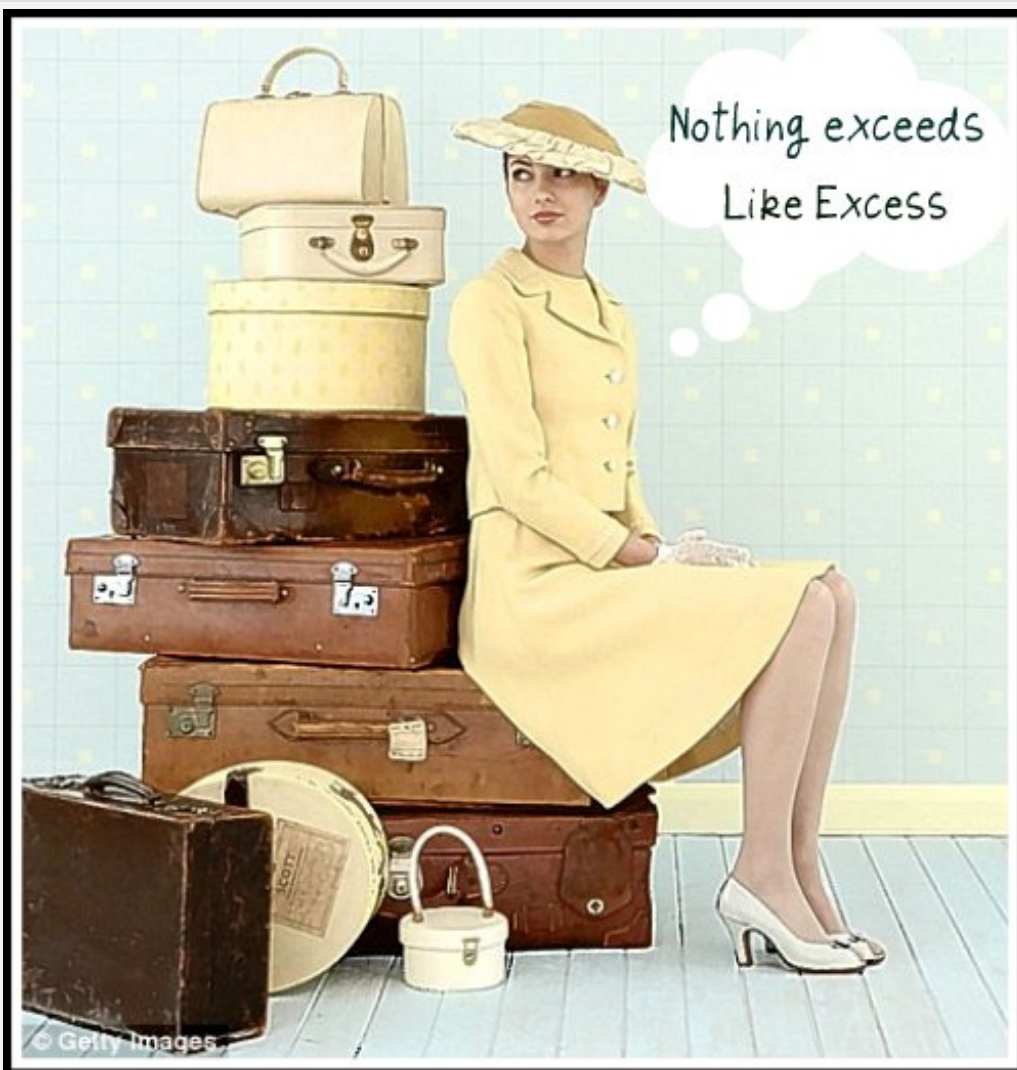
### **It's A Beautiful Day - U2**

See the world in green and blue  
See China right in front of you  
See the canyon broken by cloud  
See the tuna fleets clearing the sea out  
See the Bedouin fires at night  
See the oil fields at first light, and  
See the bird with a leaf in her mouth  
After the flood all the colors came out

I love the sunset from my veranda but in the coming weeks I'm going to enjoy a myriad of sunset's across the world which will again remind me that we all see the same sun from the same planet.

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Length x width x height = there isn't enough room for Diva's things. I knew we should have traveled by Cargo Ship.

Anyone who is a smart traveler reading this is going to roll their eyes and think I'm a loon. Can't say I blame you. I think I'm a loon.

Some people are known for their positive attributes and deservedly so. I on the other hand am known for my quirky behavior and I'm embarrassed to say, excessive nature. For example, if I am having a dinner party, regardless of the numbers invited, I cater for the entire street just in case. If someone asks me to buy them a liter (2.11 pints) of milk at the store, I'll come back with 2, just in case. If I'm traveling overseas and am allowed 1 case, I'll take two just in case, pardon the pun.

This was inevitable. I have been waiting for it as my clothes have arrived from the four corners of the globe via Australia Post. Every night I wondered if tonight would be the night. The night that Aly says 'let's see if your stuff fits in your case?'. It's a ritual for us whenever we go away. I have been standing there in front of the wardrobe attempting to convince him while trying to bunch my clothes together that of course, these thin, lightweight pieces of material will barely register on the scale. Who am I kidding? Week by week with more additions, Aly's items have been incrementally pushed down the end of the rod till they're not even visible anymore. It's like every time I shut the door and open it again, they've reproduced. So to anyone who reads this, please say a prayer for me and my clothes, specifically that they fit in the case. For once I've got to be one step ahead of Aly.

Only 11 sleeps to go. Strangely I'm starting to get nervous but I think that has more to do with the flying than anything else. I want the flight without the flying. I want the holiday without leaving the people I love. Oh well, we have to enjoy every moment of it because it will be over in the blink of an eye.

OMG...11 sleeps.

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## It's Real Cause We Have The Ticket To Prove It. Posted by: [chalice1](#) | July 20, 2009



Thank you Jen from Travelscene Westernport. You were just wonderful and we can't thank you enough.

Oh happy days. I was up to my ears in work this morning and who should ring but the lovely Jen from Travelscene Westernport, agent of choice for the most discerning of travelers. We might live in the sticks but that doesn't mean we don't have access to the best of the best 😊 Anyway, Jen told me that our documents were ready to pick up. No sooner had I put the phone down than Aly called me. He must have sensed my excitement from where he was working. It would have measured on the Richter Scale. This afternoon he stopped by to pick up the HUGE bundle of travel documents which will allow us entry to the trip of dreams.

Who hoo look at this.



✱A / Confirmed		100069452906 / ETIHAD AIRWAYS
✱A / Confirmed		100069453013 / ETIHAD AIRWAYS
9KKZ	Duration	14hr(S) :20mi
Confirmed	Class	<b>First</b>
ARBUS INDUSTRIE	Stops	0
45 JET	Mileage	7245
Seals		
AUH ABU DHABI INTL, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES		ATH ATHENS, GREECE

Look, look, look. There’s a First on my ticket.

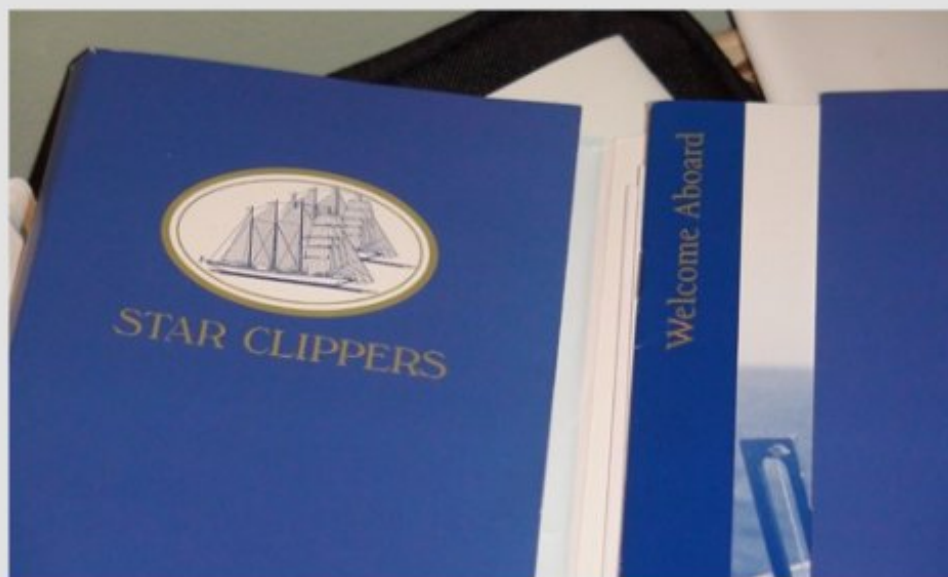
Twas a tad sad because I was expecting the old kind of ticket but hey, if it gets me entry, who cares.



Some visa’s. Oooo pretty.



Our Jordan paperwork next to our pristine Aussie passports. Funny they ran out at the same time.



The Star Clipper information and tickets.

All that's left is to take copious copies of these documents and pop them in all our cases and a copy at home. Overkill perhaps but if anyone's going to lose anything, I am. I swear I'm an airhead. Funny, someone at work said to me that I wouldn't be targeted by thieves and pickpockets. He said 'Don't take offense at this but you are very loud'. Isn't that cute? Yep it's true. Stealth is not my forte so it'd be their mistake if they took me on.

Anyway thought I would just share what I've been waiting for...our ticket to ride.

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